

THE NATURE OF SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY RELEVANT FOR THE STUDY OF MAN AND MEDICINE IN GENERAL AND HOMŒOPATHY, IN PARTICULAR

DR. B. K. SARKAR, M.B., D.M.S., CALCUTTA

The nature of scientific methodology to be adopted for the purpose of investigating truth in a particular field of knowledge, depends on the nature of its subject-matter. In Medicine, we are primarily, concerned with a department of biology, specially, human biology. The subject of medical research is Man himself. But Man is a very, very complex entity which can be studied from diverse aspects, mental, vital and material. Hence the methods of approach to study man must necessarily be diverse; and each method is as good and true as the other for acquisition of knowledge. But we have to determine first, which aspect of man is the most relevant aspect for our study for a particular purpose in hand. In medicine, we are concerned with a living man, his health, sickness, life and death. So the psycho-vital aspect of man is the most relevant aspect for study by a medical man. The methodology for such a study should be relevant to that point of view. In this age of science, whatever might be the nature of methodology it must be scientific. But here is a catch. Due to preponderance of discoveries and benefits thereof, in the realm of physical nature, science is generally equated with physical science and the research methodology of any subject is supposed to conform to that followed in connection with physical sciences. Why should it be so? The universe consists, not only of dead, inert matter but also life and mind—may be, embodied life and embodied mind i.e., though matter seems to be the basis, life has evolved in and through matter and mind has evolved in and through life. Thus man is a self-conscious,

mentalised living matter. Study of Man from a materialistic standpoint will only give us a part-truth and not the complete truth of a whole man. Even with the enormous development of physical sciences life seems to elude our grasp as yet and similar is the case with mind. In Medicine, a scientific study of Life, should be our principal pre-occupation. We have to frame suitable concepts out of our observations of vital phenomena; and the standard concept of the physical sciences fall short of our purpose. The subject of study of the physical sciences is—*matter*; and modern scientists, since Galileo's time, have studied it from a particular viewpoint, *viz.*, the physico-chemical, whereby they have succeeded to make the knowledge of Matter, very precise, almost to the point of mathematical exactitude. We hold science in esteem, because it is supposed to deal with truth. But closer study reveals that the truth discovered by physical sciences is not the complete truth; but, at best, an abstraction by differentiating the *primary qualities* (*viz.* dimension and weight) from the secondary qualities (*viz.* colour, taste, smell, etc.) of matter. We can also build up a scientific study of matter based on the secondary qualities of matter; and the study will be none the less, scientific though the balance and the measuring rod will not be applicable to it. It is evident, therefore, that *modern science* deals with *conceptual matter* having no *perceptual equivalent* by retaining the primary qualities in ideation, and colour, taste, smell etc. being abstracted in thought.

Let us see which method of study of matter is more relevant to the study of man from the medical point of view. The human being is not a test-tube, the contents of which react with mathematical accuracy, but a laboratory in which physical reactions are modified by the emotional status and that elusive yet very real factor called *individuality* of the person. In man, things, which are not measurable, are more important than those which are measurable. Should the organic structures and physiological mechanisms assume a far greater reality than thought, pleasure, sorrow and beauty? It is indispensable that our thought should cover all aspects

of reality. Overlooking this basic fact modern scientists and so-called modern scientific medical men, have reduced human organism to physics and chemistry; and failed to study man, as a whole, in health and disease. The spirit and technique of science are certainly our most precious possessions and heritage. But how must we retain all the conquests made in the domain of physical universe and yet not lose the holistic attitude towards this universal creation in which there is mind and life along with matter—that is the question. What is the way out of this impasse?

Here comes in the utility of the other approach to study matter by getting hold of *perceptual matter*. This is not a newly-discovered approach but one, discovered thousands of years ago in India. According to Indian conception the connecting medium between spirit and matter is the psyche or soul-power and the primary action psychological and qualitative, not physical and quantitative. "The predominance of physical science has accustomed us" writes Sri Aurobindo, "to a different view of nature, because there the first thing that strikes us is the importance of the quantitative aspect of her workings and her dependence for the creation of forms on quantitative combinations and dispositions." This Indian notion of matter is based upon a psychological analysis of the actual experience of matter, the elements thus obtained being substantialised and not upon a physico-chemical analysis such as that of western science. Here matter is what appears to us directly through our five senses. Ordinarily we come in contact with matter through our sense-bound mind. We can classify matter in terms of our five-fold senses; and this classification is most comprehensive as it covers the whole sphere of thought and existence. Whatever may be the value and utility of conceptual matter in the domain of physics and chemistry, *i.e.*, in the field of inert matter, the notion of *perceptual matter* is indispensable in investigating fields of biology and psychology from a scientific point of view. Otherwise there will be an attempt to reduce organism to mechanism, physiology into chemico-physical processes and confuse spirit with matter while

explaining the universe. It is to be borne in mind that the connecting link between life and matter in living bodies is through the medium of sensations in which material formulations are transformed into vital values which, in turn, are mentalised in our living, mentalised-conscious matter, we call, human organism. In the Indian system of Medicine, therefore, the idea of *perceptual matter* is applied to all things, medical. And this is just as much a scientific approach to matter as that of physical sciences. So we should not accept the chemico-physical approach to study matter as the only approach to scientific study of matter. Therefore the methodologies to be followed in the two-fold approaches to study matter, are bound to differ. The modern physical sciences follow quantitative-analytical-experimental method; while the psycho-vital investigations should follow qualitative-synoptic-experimental method. The former method is causal in nature while the latter is based on phenomenology. That is why Homœopathy which attempts to study man from psycho-vital point of view, follows the phenomenological methodology and Hahnemann left the whole thing on a descriptive level.

Now, let us further elucidate the implication of the phenomenological methodology in Homœopathy, in particular :—

Any complete system of Medicine consists of a Science-portion and Art-portion. Homœopathy is primarily an art though it follows strictly scientific methodology at every step. Homœopathy is based on abnormal life functions. It has yet to discover and determine the concepts of normal dynamic physiology as different from the chemico-physical processes underlying vital functions and dynamic pathology as distinguished from gross structural pathology. Life is the creative principle of unity and baffles all analysis. But this is also true that expressions of life in and through the organism in the form of sensations and functions can be studied scientifically, *i.e.*, they can be observed, analysed, generalised and suitable terms for their denotations and connotations, coined. The metaphysics of life may not be ascertained with our ordinary human knowledge; but science of life can be

built up through the similar methods of observation, experimentation, analysis, classifications, deductions, generalisations etc. Hahnemann built up his system of healing art on the basis of existentiality of life but did not build up a science of Life out of the series of phenomena he observed regarding vital functions. He left the Homœopathic literature on a descriptive level. Its language does not fulfil the requisites of a scientific language viz., (1) that there should be a name for every important meaning; and (2) every general name should have a fixed and precise meaning. This implies that scientific language requires a Nomenclature and a Terminology. Further every general name should have a precise and fixed meaning. In other words, the general names employed in any science should be free from ambiguity. Sometimes this is possible by the use of technical names especially coined for. But often every science has to borrow names which are current in the time. In such cases, these names should be strictly defined. Hence *naming* is intimately connected with *Definition*. Names are given to things or classes not arbitrarily but because, they possess certain essential properties in common. It is from this standpoint that Homœopathic language is defective. Homœopathy deals with life and its functionings but it uses terms whose connotations are suited to current concepts of physiology and pathology, which, in their turn, are based on chemicophysical category of existence. As for example, the pathological technicalities like "inflammation," "catarrh" etc. are coarse and inadequate for use in relation to the Dynamic or vital plane, e.g. 'Bryonia' inflammation and 'Rhus tox' inflammation, mean differently as they are described at length by adding other phrases with them such as "relieved by cold" or "relieved by heat." There is no single term which will connote the change plus the modality associated with it. It is here that *Ayurveda*, the Indian system of medicine, scores in having made a truly scientific study of life and having elucidated general principles and concepts for facility of comprehension and systematization of knowledge. As medicine is concerned with living human organism and the physical body forms a part of the biological whole,

Ayurveda has succeeded in co-ordinating and incorporating the physical formulæ with the vital formulæ by evolving specific biological formulæ of the triad of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kafa*. The five categories of physical matter have been transformed into three by the method of earth and water being grouped into one and air and ether being combined together with the result that all the five physical proto-elements found place in the living organism being translated into the biological forces of *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kafa*, i.e. air and ether being combined into *Vata*, fire turned into *Pitta* and water and earth combined into *Kafa*. *Ayurveda* maintains that the vital phenomena are capable of being expressed by scientific laws involving terms and concepts appropriate simultaneously, to the categories of life and matter, through the *Tridosh* theory of *Vayu*, *Pitta* and *Kafa*. Life is expressed through sensations and functions, and disease which is nothing but altered life, has also to express itself through sensation, however changed or altered they might be. So, all the sensations perceived by a man in health and disease have been observed, analysed and classified. Homœopathy instead of basing itself on naturalities, constructs itself on the abnormal conditions of life and health but without framing appropriate concepts for the purpose. We treat neither life, *pér sé* nor body *pér sé*. We treat living body and the concepts, suitable for medicine, should be integrated concepts, comprising both life and matter.

So long Homœopathy does not fulfil these requisites of a philosophical or scientific language, it is compelled to leave the whole thing at a descriptive level and it will continue to be persistently stigmatised as a "rebel-child" of the orthodox school of medicine. That is why it is such a Herculean task to master the Homœopathic *Materia Medica*; and the controversy regarding the place of pathology in Homœopathy will never come to an end; and hitherto unexplored regions of Homœopathy will yet remain obscure for a long time to come.

(Continued on Page 134)